

Loss & Grief



Most people think of the grieving process as something experienced only after the death of a loved one; but **we grieve for many reasons**—be it the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, the end of a relationship, or the loss of good health. In fact, even events of a wider scale, such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks, can cause people to grieve at the loss of their sense of safety and security. **Anytime something significant is taken away from us, we grieve**; and that grieving process can trigger a host of unfamiliar and confusing emotions and behaviours.

(<http://www.sharecare.com/health/stress-reduction/article/coping-with-grief>)

Bereavement is the grief associated with death.

Types of Losses

Losses may be **tangible** (actual or physical). These are apparent and easily recognised.

Losses may be **intangible** (perceived or psychological). These losses are less obvious. They may be tied to personal perceptions such as one's prestige, power, dreams, plans, security, etc. Because these losses are less likely to be acknowledged, admitting to the accompanying feelings or loss can be difficult or embarrassing. Consequently, emotional support may be inadequate.

Examples of loss:

- Loss of a body part
- An injury
- Changes in physical health
- Loss of a loved one
- Separation or divorce
- Living with someone with an addiction
- Witnessing a traumatic event
- Retirement
- Financial changes
- Moving
- Loss of memory
- Domestic abuse
- Family member with chronic illness
- Sibling with special needs
- Abandonment by a parent
- Living with someone with mental illness
- Loss of friends
- Empty nest
- Being bullied

What is the Greatest Loss?

The greatest loss is when it happens to you, whatever the circumstance or the relationship. Each loss must be recognized and validated.

(www.griefspeaks.com/id107.htm)

The more significant the loss, the more intense the reaction.

Why do we Grieve?

Grief is our response to loss. Grieving helps us restore the “fit between the world that is and the world that should be”. (Worden 2009) After a loss is sustained, a healing process is necessary to re-establish equilibrium.

“Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain. It is a sorting process. One by one you let go of things that are gone. And you mourn them. One by one you take hold of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again.”

Rachael Naomi Remen

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Responses to Grief.

Grief is associated with feelings of sadness, yearning, guilt, regret and anger, among others. Some people may experience a sense of meaninglessness, others can feel a sense of relief. Emotions are often surprising in their strength or mildness, and they can also be confusing, such as when a person misses a painful relationship.

Everyone grieves in their own way. There is no “right” way or “wrong” way to grieve.

There are many factors that influence a person’s experience of grief, including:

- the age of the person who is grieving (child, adolescent or adult)
- the type of relationship with the loss
- the nature of the relationship with the loss
- the way the loss occurred
- religious or spiritual beliefs
- cultural practices
- availability of support from family, friends and community
- associated stresses (such as financial difficulties,

job loss, relationship breakdown).

Generally there are two broad styles of grieving, but most people experience a combination of both. They are

- The **intuitive approach** – people seek out social support and tend to focus on the emotional aspects of their loss and managing their feelings.
- The **instrumental approach** – people tend to focus on the cognitive (thinking) aspects of their loss. They may grieve through activities and problem solving. This style tends to be more solitary and private, focusing on managing the thoughts that arise.

“Every great loss demands that we choose life again. We need to grieve in order to do this. The pain we have not grieved over will always stand between us and life. When we don't grieve, a part of us becomes caught in the past like Lot's wife who, because she looked back, was turned into a pillar of salt. Grieving is not about forgetting. Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain. It is a sorting process. One by one you let go of the things that are gone and you mourn for them. One by one you take hold of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again.” Rachel Naomi Remen

What does Grief look like?

Grief includes a wide range of emotions, thoughts and behaviours. You may experience some or all of the following reactions, as well as many that aren’t included in the list.

Physical/ Behavioural response to Loss

- Tightness in chest and throat
- Social withdrawal
- Changes in sleeping & appetite pattern
- Hollowness in stomach
- Heightened sensitivity to noise and light
- Depersonalization
- Breathlessness
- Weakness and Lack of energy
- Dry mouth
- Crying
- Unable to sit still
- Significant weight loss or gain

Emotional Response to Loss

- Anger
- frustration with helplessness to change the situation
- Guilt and self-reproach
- Anxiety
- Panic

- Loneliness
- Fatigue
- Helplessness
- Shock
- Yearning
- Numbness
- Low self-esteem

Cognitive Response to Loss

- Disbelief
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Preoccupation
- Hallucinations
- Change of values and belief
- Lacking attention or concentration
- Struggling to think clearly or remember things

Ultimately, most of us find a way to carry on after a loss. But the process we go through to do that can be complicated and emotionally messy. The process can be so overwhelming that some people fail to recover from it sufficiently enough to make good choices for themselves. In this circumstance it is necessary to seek professional support and therapy/counselling

Are there “stages” of Grief?

The experience of grief can sometimes feel like a storm. A person may feel that the storm has passed, but then be surprised when the next storm strikes. These sudden temporary upsurges in the grief storm can be particularly strong when there is an anniversary of the loss or when memories are triggered (such as by a piece of music, a particular smell, a routine, a place, a dream).

A number of academics have proffered models to describe the process of grief. In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what became known as the “five stages of grief”:

- Denial: “This can’t be happening to me.”
- Anger: “*Why* is this happening? Who is to blame?”
- Bargaining: “Make this not happen, and in return I will ____.”
- Depression: “I’m too sad to do anything.”
- Acceptance: “I’m at peace with what happened.”

Not everyone who grieves goes through all of these stages. Kübler-Ross herself never intended for these stages to be a rigid framework that applies to every-

one. “They are responses to loss that many people have, but **there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss.** Our grieving is as individual as our lives.” (<http://www.helpguide.org>)

Grief is a process, not an event.

It is a journey, not a destination.

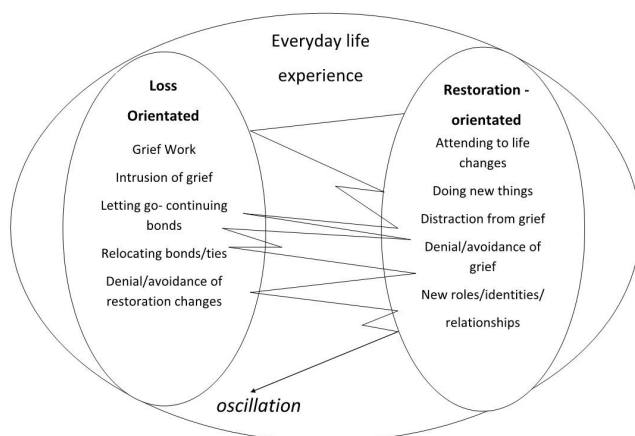
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

We now know that grief includes a wide range of emotions, thoughts and behaviours. It doesn’t help to think that grief will always happen in a predictable and orderly way – everyone moves through grief in their own unique way. If you believe that grief will follow predictable stages, you are likely to expect a bereaved person to put the experience behind them within a certain time. The reality is that most of us will continue to grieve in subtle ways for the rest of our lives, even when we seem to be getting on with life.

As the sun’s rays tinge the edges of the cloud;
so too grief touches our life experiences.
Sometimes a storm; sometimes a rainbow.

The journey of grief

The Stroebe & Schut (1995) Dual Processing Model of Coping with Loss identifies the movement of grief between “Loss-orientated Activities” (crying, anger, anxiety, sadness) and “Restoration-orientated Activities” (adapting, managing change, cultivating new ways of connecting, doing new things, new roles, organising life after the loss)



We do not “move on” from grief. An emotional reaction to a trigger may throw the person into grief; acknowledging the grief and then using a range of old and new coping strategies, moves the person into attending to life and everyday commitments and tasks.

Children Grieve

Children go through a number of different developmental stages. These relate to biological and psychological aspects of growth, all of which are interconnected. Successful development through these stages results in the formation of a healthy person with a positive self awareness and perception of the world (Erickson).

An experience of loss and grief in these early stages can arrest a developmental stage and have impacts at a later time in life.

Young people typically use different ways of coping with loss from those used by adults. Children may not express grief directly, but indirectly through play and behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour cannot be excused but it must be appropriately addressed. Counsellors look at the interconnectedness of life and mental stages and the underlying grief. Active listening helps identify the items of importance and the role they play in the young person’s behaviour.

Children may look to the adults around them to learn how to respond to the experience of loss. A child needs timely, clear and direct information. They should also be allowed to ask questions, be given information and the opportunity to make decisions for themselves.

“HOW PEOPLE *Live* MATTERS”

... it really does.

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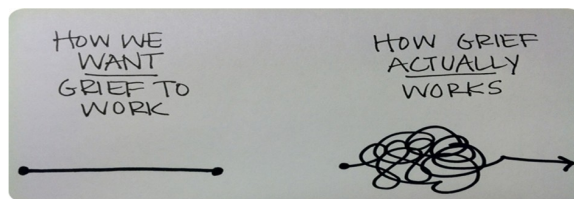
Others can only understand the intensity of the loss when they understand the meaning another ascribes to the loss or change.

Existential reaction to grief.

Grief can raise important philosophical and spiritual questions, and may prompt us to ponder our faith and the meaning of life. Our experience of loss may destroy many of the assumptions that we have held about the world, such as ‘the world is a safe place’, ‘the old die before the young’ or ‘bad things don’t happen to good people’. These beliefs are often shattered in the wake of a profound experience of loss and grief. (<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>)

The experience for many grieving people has been described as ‘re-learning the world’. Many people also discover a deepening of their spiritual beliefs and can identify how they have grown as a result of their grief experience.

It is important not to try to ‘speed up’ the grieving process. Coming to terms with a significant loss can take months and sometimes years. It cannot be done in days or weeks. Most people simply need the loving, supportive presence of other people, permission to talk about their loss and encouragement to use their own coping strategies to learn to live with their grief.



Therapists seek to join with their clients in seeking meaning in the midst of grief and revision of a life story punctuated by loss. (Julianne Whyte)

If you feel you, or someone you know, might need professional help, don’t hesitate to contact a qualified Mental Health professional.

Recipe : Bacon & Eggs (to the next level)

<http://changinghabits.com.au/recipes>

Ingredients

- 2-3 x free range eggs (organic if possible)
- 1 cup of kale, chopped
- 1/2 cup rocket
- 1 tsp ground tumeric
- Freshly cracked pepper
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 tbsp sauerkraut or 1 tsp probiotics
- Pinch of seaweed salt
- 1 tbsp Inca Inchi (optional)
- 1 tsp extra dulce flakes
- 2 rashers of bacon

Method

1. Boil up some water in a pot or pan on

the stove, add a dash of apple cider vinegar.

2. Crack your eggs into the water when on a high simmer and take out when they are your desired firmness.
3. Whilst they are cooking, heat up a pan of coconut oil and add your bacon.
4. While your eggs and bacon are cooking, lay down a bed of rocket.
5. Once the bacon and eggs are cooked, lay them on some paper towel to drain then add them to your plate, followed by the sauerkraut or probiotics sprinkled over the top.
6. Finally, while the pan is still hot where your bacon was, add the kale to fry up, and toss the tumeric, seaweed salt and pepper through the kale.
7. Once the kale is soft or even crispy, place on the plate.
8. Finally, sprinkle with dulce and pour the Inca Inchi oil over the meal and enjoy.

